



Directed by: Hubert Davis

Produced by: Vinay Virmani, Scott Moore

Cast: P.K. Subban, Akim Aliu, Saroya Tinker, Wayne Simmonds, Blake Bolden, Willie O'Ree

U.S. Release Date: July 14, 2023

Rating: R

Running Time: 95 mins

Hashtag: #BlackIce

Genre: Documentary

Roadside Attractions Publicity Contacts

Elissa Greer | elissag@roadsideattractions.com

Ditte Nebbegaard | ditten@roadsideattractions.com

National Publicity

Jackie Bazan | jbazan@bazanpr.com

Digital Publicity

Ginsberg/Libby | Digital@ginsberglibby.com

For production notes and stills, please visit:

<https://roadsideattractionspublicity.com/filmography/blackice/>

SYNOPSIS

Black Ice is the award-winning UNINTERRUPTED documentary that exposes a history of racism in hockey through the untold stories of black hockey players, both past and present, in a predominantly white sport.

Directed by Academy Award®- and Emmy-nominated filmmaker Hubert Davis, *Black Ice* masterfully navigates the challenges, triumphs, and unique experiences faced by these athletes through poignant firsthand accounts from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) hockey players past, including Willie O'Ree, the first Black player in the National Hockey League, and former professional hockey player Akim Aliu, with the stories of present stars, including P.K. Subban and Wayne Simmonds. The film explores the deep BIPOC roots of the game, dating back to 1865 and the Colored Hockey League of the Maritimes (CHL), the first all-pro league, which not only introduced the slapshot but shaped the game of hockey we know today. Davis exposes racist patterns that span generations, even highlighting stories of how sports institutions have exerted pressure on players seeking change to remain silent.

ABOUT THE FILM

Producer Vinay Virmani came across this project close to five years ago, and when he learned about the history of the Colored Hockey League dating back to the 1800s, he felt so many emotions, not only as a Canadian but because it also represents another lost piece of history which has impeded equality and the true legacy of this beloved sport worldwide.

He started asking people from different sectors: sports historians, business leaders, sports fans, media personalities whether they knew about the Colored Hockey League and the contributions they made to the sport of hockey. Consistently, no one seemed to have any background on the innovations that informed the game we know now, including the slap shot, to how they structured the league, as well as what the league meant for the Black community's mobilization, independence, and entrepreneurialism at that time.

Black Ice has taken shape over the past several years, informed by senseless tragedy activism, resilience, and unyielding pride, but the goal has always been consistent; to address systemic racism through the construct of sport. In doing so, through the authentic history of hockey, and empowering contemporary Black voices, the hope is that the film will be a flashpoint to take pride in telling and re-telling these stories and inspire future generations to embrace the past while effecting change today.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

- *from Director Hubert Davis*

When I first learned about the Black Hockey League of Nova Scotia, I was shocked that I had never heard of it before. Nothing is more Canadian than hockey, and yet this amazing world of early hockey pioneers and innovators has been almost completely lost, discarded, and forgotten. Are these stories not important? Do they not matter to us? Or is this something we'd rather not talk about, a subject that forces us to confront uncomfortable truths about what we like to believe is a fair and diverse society?

It made me think about how many other stories of black pioneers have been lost or forgotten. And it made me want to ask questions. Why is hockey at every level an almost exclusively white sport?

When examining the history of professional hockey, a disturbing picture emerges suggesting institutional racism and minority exclusion.

Between 1895-1930 it is estimated over 400 black Canadians and Americans played semi-professional hockey throughout North America. The bulk of them playing primarily in the Maritime provinces of Canada, with others on teams in Ontario, and the American cities of Minnesota and Boston. Despite this fact, four decades would pass before the first black hockey player would play in the National Hockey League. It's been 60 years since Willie O'Ree's landmark breaking of hockey's color barrier, yet to date, only 96 black players have ever played in the NHL while pioneering black hockey players such as Art Dorrington, Richard Lord, and Chook Maxwell were denied opportunities to play at hockey's highest level.

Of all the major sports in North America, the sport of professional ice hockey is the least diverse. The NHL has never had a black head coach and only a few blacks have reached the level of assistant coach. With increasing diversity throughout North America, the question has to be asked: Why have there not been more black professional hockey players and coaches emerge? And what does this say about our society? What does it say about who we are and how we view ourselves?

My own personal story will guide me in this work. When I played basketball at McGill University I was the only black player on the team. I understand the feeling of isolation, of being the 'other', that many black players have felt in a predominantly white sport and a predominantly white society. There's a lot of pressure to assimilate and to not stand out too much, but at the same time, you're never fully comfortable, no matter how much you try to fit in. There's a weird duality to it. I'm sure the same is true of black hockey players today, as most would be the only black player on their team. I wanted to explore what that means, and the consequences on them personally and in the sport.

Black Ice gives us the perfect vehicle to explore the uncomfortable issues of the present through a largely ignored and forgotten past.

This is the heart of this film; a weaving of past and present stories of racial discrimination in hockey, as a way of holding a mirror up to our society today, examining how we view ourselves, and offering a pathway forward to a more just and inclusive future.

ABOUT THE VISUAL STYLE

- *from Director Hubert Davis*

I always like docs that feel narrative in nature, in the way music, sound and cinematography work to craft and tell a story. To this end, I wanted to make a distinctive choice in cinematic language, shooting anamorphic lenses, and being very strategic in how the interviews are shot and lit. Throughout the film, interview imagery has a beautiful, moody quality that speaks to the idea of 'black ice'. Stylized lighting and a backdrop that feels like a darkened arena. Everything speaks to that theme of isolation that I spoke of, in terms of being the only black player on an otherwise all-white team.

I don't want to sugarcoat anything. Black Ice should make people viscerally uncomfortable at times, especially when talking about how these players felt when they found a racial slur on their locker, or the racial slurs which were shouted at them by opposing fans, or even their own. I know that feeling all too well. Your heart races, it's very visceral. I want viewers to get that same feeling -- not throughout the film, but there are moments when you should feel on edge.

To further accentuate the feeling of isolation I wanted to introduce topographical imagery of the vastness and beauty of Canada by flying drones over a variety of landscapes. A lot of the stories of discrimination take place in small Canadian towns, so we have an opportunity to open things up visually, showing the stunning landscapes of Nova Scotia and the Eastern regions, giving the film a bigger cinematic scope that speaks to the entirety of Canada.

ABOUT THE CAST

AKIM ALIU

Former NHL player, and founder of the Hockey Diversity Alliance. Many would say that Akim has been the most significant voice in hockey's 'racial reckoning' to date.

SAROYA TINKER

Currently playing for the Toronto Six of the PHF. Saroya is the Executive Director of Black Girl Hockey Club, and has been a pioneer for women of color at all levels of hockey.

WAYNE SIMMONDS

An NHL veteran, Wayne Simmonds speaks at length about the 'team first' culture of hockey, and how oftentimes this has suppressed Black voices from speaking up to injustice. Now using his platform to speak on the problems in hockey, Wayne is a crucial figure in the film's story.

P.K. SUBBAN

One of the biggest names in the sport of hockey. P.K. opens up about the challenges he has faced at every level of the sport.

WILLIE O'REE

The first player to break hockey's color barrier at the NHL level, Willie O'Ree lends his voice to honor those who came before him.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

HUBERT DAVIS (Director)

Hubert Davis was the first Black Canadian director to be nominated for an Oscar. Davis' directorial debut *Hardwood*, which was nominated for both an Academy Award® and an Emmy®, explored the relationship between Hubert and his Harlem Globetrotter father Mel Davis.

Hubert's next project *Aruba*, a dramatic short, had its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival. His first feature documentary film *Invisible City* followed the lives of two Black boys coming of age in Toronto's Regent Park housing project and went on to win Best Canadian Feature at the Hot Docs Film Festival. Hubert's most recent feature documentary *Giants of Africa* which followed Toronto Raptors President Masai Ujiri, made its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival.

VINAY VIRMANI (Producer)

Vinay Virmani is a graduate of Toronto's York University, long regarded as a progressive beacon for its programs in media and the performing arts. He also studied at New York's prestigious Lee Strasberg Theatre & Film Institute, after which he went on to launch his own film and TV production company, First Take Entertainment.

Driven by a firm belief that diversity in storytelling is the future of the entertainment industry, Vinay formed First Take Entertainment with a mandate to create compelling content that resonates with and connects people, no matter where they are in the world.

As the content industry continues to evolve, so does Vinay's vision. His latest appointment is Partner & Chief Content Officer with Uninterrupted—a powerful portal that gives top athletes a platform to share their unique stories and authentic experiences with an audience that's ready to be inspired. This LeBron James and Drake-led venture also has Vinay hosting Kneading Dough – a show about financial literacy where top athletes reveal how they're coming to terms with handling the money that accompanies their superstardom.

Vinay is also known for his role in writing and starring in the film *Breakaway*, as well as *Dr. Cabbie* where he was a writer, lead actor and producer. In addition, Vinay played a role in the production of the films *Little Italy* and *Two Lovers and a Bear*.

SCOTT MOORE (Producer)

Scott Moore is CEO of Uninterrupted Canada and Good Karma Studios. Moore has over 36 years of senior management experience in sports broadcast, media and sponsorship sales.

From 2010 to 2018, Moore was President of Broadcasting and Sportsnet at Rogers Media. During that time, Rogers signed the largest media rights deal in Canadian history, a 12 year/5.2 Billion Dollar agreement with the National Hockey League, which led the transformation of Sportsnet into Canada's Number One Sports Media Brand. During his time there, he oversaw the launch of North America's first mainstream sports OTT service, and developed new digital products such as "Ice Surfing" with Twitter.

Prior to Rogers, Moore was General Manager of Sports and Network Revenue at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), overseeing both the Beijing Olympic coverage and CBC's coverage of the 2010 FIFA World Cup and Commonwealth Games.

Moore is a veteran of 11 Olympic Games, having worked for Canadian and US networks, as well as the IOC. He has been part of 5 network launches, and worked as a producer and executive producer of hundreds of major sporting events and entertainment broadcasts.

CHRIS ROMEIKE (Director of Photography)

Chris Romeike, csc is a freelance director of photography and filmmaker working in documentary, fiction and commercial cinematography. His roots in photojournalism and experimental film have informed his approach, bringing an inspired, innovative cinematic quality to documentary and expressive naturalism to fiction.

International travel, collaborating with a diversity of talented directors on award winning films, campaigns, and series, many of which take on difficult subject matters, has refined Chris's passion and sensitivity as a cinematographer. These experiences have shaped Chris's ability to navigate the subtle nuances of visual storytelling and elevate the human emotion of story with respect and empathy.

Chris's most recent credits of note include the feature documentaries *9/11 Kids* (Hot Docs '20, DOC NYC '20, Realscreen '20, CBC) by director Elizabeth St. Philip for which he is nominated for the 2021 Canadian Screen Award for Best Photography in Documentary, *Inconvenient Indian*, awarded the "People's Choice Documentary Award" and "Amplify Voices Award for Best Canadian Film" at TIFF '20, Grand Prize for Best National Feature (RIDM '20), *Giants of Africa* by director Hubert Davis (TIFF '16, Elevation Pictures, Netflix) which also garnered a Canadian Screen Award nomination for Best Feature Documentary Cinematography.

In documentary television series and hybrid shows, titles include "Rise" (Viceland, CSA Best Doc Series), MUSEUM SECRETS (History Channel), "The Nature of Things" (CBC), "In the Making" (CBC), the drama documentaries "The Body Machine" (Discovery Canada) and "The Greatest Martian War of 1913-1917" (History Channel).

Innovative short form and inventive commercial work is also a passion for Chris. His various works with director Hubert Davis includes "Move Your Mind" (NFB), the Cannes Lions winning "Once More", and HP's "Rivolta", which followed notorious hacker Michael 'Mafiaboy' Calce and was the recipient of a Cannes Film Lion in 2017.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

**First Take Entertainment Presents
In Association with Uninterrupted Canada
In Partnership with TSN**

With Special Thanks to

**Springhill Entertainment
Dream Crew Entertainment**

Directed By **Hubert Davis**
Produced By **Vinay Virmani**
Produced By **Scott Moore**
Executive Producers **LeBron James / Maverick Carter**
Executive Producers **Aubrey “Drake” Graham / Adel “Future” Nur**
Executive Producers **Ajay Virmani / Pauline Dhillon**

Coordinating Producer **Karen Zylak**
Line Producer **Karen Volden**
Associate Producers **Akim Aliu, George Fosty, Darril Fosty, Will Mansbridge, Charles Officer, P.K. Subban**

Director of Photography **Christopher Romeike, CSC**
Edited by **Eamonn O’Connor**
Additional Editing by **Aden Bahadori**
Original Music Composed By **Simon Poole**